

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From the Working Man's Friend.

A GOOD INVESTMENT.

'That's a smart little fellow of yours,' said a gentleman named Winslow to a labouring man who was called in occasionally to do work about his warehouse. 'Does he go to school?'

'Not now sir,' replied the poor man. 'Why not Davis? He looks like a bright lad.'

'He's got good parts, sir,' returned the father; 'but—'

'But what?' asked the gentleman, seeing that the man hesitated.

'Times are rather hard now, sir, and I have a large family. It's about as much as I can do to keep hunger and cold away. Ned reads very well, writes a tolerably fair hand, considering all things, and can figure a little. And that's about all I can do for him. The other children are coming forward, and I reckon he will have to go to a trade middling soon.'

'How old is Ned?' inquired Mr Winslow.

'He's turned of eleven.'

'You won't put him to a trade before he's thirteen or fourteen.'

'Can't keep him at home idling about all that time, Mr Winslow. It would be his ruin. It's young to go out from home, I know, to rough it and tough it among strangers—there was a slight unsteadiness in the poor man's voice—but it's better than doing nothing.'

'Ned ought to go to school a year or two longer, Davis,' said Mr Winslow, with some interest in his manner. 'And as you are not able to pay the quarter bills, I will—What say you? If I pay for Ned's schooling, can you keep him at home two or three years longer?'

'I didn't expect that of you, Mr Winslow, said the poor man, and his voice now trembled. He uncovered his head as he spoke, almost reverentially. 'You aint bound to pay for schooling my boy, sir.'

'But you have not answered my question, Davis. What say you?'

'Oh, sir, are you really in earnest—'

'I am in earnest. Ned ought to go to school. If you can keep him home a few years longer, I will pay for his education during the time. 'Ned'—Mr Winslow spoke to the boy—'what say you? Would you like to go to school again?'

'Yes, indeed, sir,' quickly answered the boy, while his bright young face was lit up with a gleam of intelligence.

'Then you shall go my fine fellow. There's the right kind of stuff in you, or I'm mistaken. We'll give you a trial at any rate.'

Mr Winslow was as good as his word—Ned was immediately entered at an excellent school. The boy, young as he was, appreciated the kind act of his benefactor, and resolved to profit by it to the fullest extent.

'I made an investment of five pounds to-day,' said Mr Winslow, jestingly, to a mercantile friend, some twelve months after the occurrence just related took place, 'and here's the certificate.'

He held up a small slip of paper as he spoke.

'Five pounds! A large portion! In what fund?'

'A charity fund.'

'Oh!' and the friend shrugged his shoulders. 'Don't do much in that way myself. No great faith in the security. What dividend do you expect to receive?'

'Don't know. Rather think it will be large.'

'Better take some more of the stock if you think it is so good. There is plenty in market to be bought at less than par.'

'Mr Winslow smiled, and said that in all probability, he should invest a few more small sums in the same way, and see how they would turn out. The little piece of paper, which he called a certificate of stock, was the first year's bill he had paid for Ned's schooling. For four years these bills were regularly paid, and then Ned, who had well improved the opportunities so generously afforded him, was taken on the recommendation of Mr Winslow, into a large importing house. He was at that time in his sixteenth year. Before the lad could enter upon this employment, however, Mr Winslow had to make another investment in his charity fund. Ned's father was too poor to give him an outfit of clothing such as was required in the new position to which he was to be elevated; knowing this, the generous merchant came forward again, and furnished the needful supply.

As no wages were received by Ned for the first two years, Mr Winslow continued to buy his clothing, while his father still gave him his board. On reaching the age of eighteen, Ned's employers, who were much pleased with his industry, intelligence, and attention to business, put him on a salary of eighty pounds a year. This made him at once independent. He could pay his own boarding, and find his own clothes, and proud did he feel on the day when advanced to so desirable a position.

'How comes on your investment?' asked Mr Winslow's mercantile friend about this time. He spoke jestingly.

'It promises very well,' was the smiling reply.

'It is rising in the market, then?'

'Yes.'

'Any dividends yet?'

'Oh, certainly. Large dividends.'

'Ah! You surprise me. What kind of dividends?'

'More than a hundred per cent.'

'Indeed! Not in money?'

'Oh, no; but in something better than money—the satisfaction that flows from an act of benevolence wisely done.'

'Oh, that's all.' The friend spoke with ill-concealed contempt.

'Don't you call that something?' asked Mr Winslow.

'It's too unsubstantial for me,' replied the other. 'I go in for returns of a more tangible character. Those you speak of won't pay.'

Mr Winslow smiled, and bade his friend good morning.

'He knows nothing,' said he to himself, as he mused on the subject, 'of the pleasure of doing good, and the loss is all on his side. If we have the ability to secure investments of this kind, they are about the best we can make, and all are able to put at least some money in the fund of good works, let it be ever so small an amount. Have I suffered the abridgement of a single comfort by what I have done?'

No. Have I gained in pleasant thoughts and feelings by the act? Largely. It has been a source of perennial enjoyment. I would not have believed that at so small a cost I could have secured so much pleasure. And how great the good may flow from what I have done. Instead of a mere day laborer, whose work in the world goes not beyond the handling of boxes, bales and barrels, or the manufacture of articles in common use, Edward Davis, advanced by education, takes a position of more extended usefulness, and, by his higher ability and more intelligent action in society, will be able, if he rightly use the power in his hands, to advance the world's onward movement in an important degree.'

Thus thought Mr Winslow, and his heart grew warm within him. Time proved that he had not erred in affording the lad an opportunity for obtaining a good education. His quick mind acquired, in the position in which he was placed, accurate ideas of business, and industry and force of character made these ideas thoroughly practical. Every year his employers advanced his salary, and, on attaining his majority, it was further advanced to the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

With every increase the young man had devoted a larger and larger proportion of his income to improving the condition of his father's family, and when it was raised to the sum last mentioned, he took a neat, comfortable house, much larger than the family had before lived in, and paid the whole rent himself. Moreover, through his acquaintance and influence, he was able to get a place for his father at lighter employment than he had heretofore been engaged in, and at higher wages.

'Any more dividends on your charity investment?' said Mr Winslow's friend about this time. He spoke with the old manner and from old feelings.

'Yes. Got a dividend to-day—the largest yet received,' replied the merchant, with a smile.

'Did you? Hope it does you a great deal of good.'

'It is doing me a great deal of good,' returned Mr Winslow.

'No cash, I presume?'

'Something a great deal better. Let me explain.'

'Do please, sir.'

'You know the particulars of this investment?'

His friend shook his head and replied—

'No. The fact is I never felt interest enough in the matter to enquire for particulars.'

'Oh. Well, then, I must give you a little history. You know old Davis, who has been working about our stores for the last ten or fifteen years?'

'Yes.'

'Well, my investment was in the education of his son.'

'Indeed!'

'His father took him from school when he was only 11 years old, because he could not afford to send him any longer, and was about putting the little fellow out to learn a trade. Something interested me in the child, who was a bright lad, and, acting from a good impulse that came over me at the moment, I proposed to his father to send him to school three or four years, if he would board and clothe him during the time. To this he readily agreed. So I paid for Ned's schooling until he was in his sixteenth year, and then got him into Webb and Waldron's warehouse, where he has since been.'

'Webb and Waldron's!' said the friend, evincing some surprise. I know all their clerks very well, for we do a great deal of business with them. Which is Mr Davis's son?'

'The one they call Edward.'

Not that tall, fine looking young man—their leading salesman?'

'The same.'

'Is it possible! Why he's worth any two clerks in the office.'

'I know he is.'

'For his age there is not a better salesman in the city.'

'So I believe,' said Mr Winslow; 'nor,' added he, 'a better man.'

'I know little of his personal character; but unless his face deceives me, it cannot be but good.'

'It is good. Let me say a word about him. The moment his salary increased beyond what was absolutely required to pay his

board and find such clothing as his position made it necessary for him to wear, he devoted the entire surplus to rendering his father's family more comfortable.'

'Highly praiseworthy,' said the friend.

'I had received already many dividends on my investment,' continued Mr Winslow; 'but when that fact came to my knowledge, my dividend exceeded all the other dividends put together.'

'The mercantile friend was silent. If ever in his life he had envied the reward of a good deed, it was then.

'To-day,' went on Mr Winslow, 'I have received a still larger dividend. I was passing along Wood street, when I met old Mr Davis coming out of a house, the rent of which, from its appearance, was not less than forty pounds a year.'

'You don't live here of course,' said I, for I knew the old man's income to be small.

'Oh, yes I do,' he made answer, with a smile.

I turned round and looked at the house again.

'You must be getting better off in the world,' I said.

'So I am,' was his reply.

'Has anybody left you a little fortune? I enquired.

'No, no; but you have helped me to one,' said he.

'I do not understand you, Mr Davis,' I made answer.

'Edward rents the house,' said the old man, smiling. Do you understand me now?'

'I understood him perfectly. It was then that I received the largest dividend on my investment which has yet come into my hands. If they go on increasing at this rate I shall soon be rich.'

'Rather unsubstantial kind of riches,' replied the friend.

'That which elevates and delights the mind can hardly be called unsubstantial,' replied Mr Winslow. 'Gold will not always do this.'

The friend sighed involuntarily. The remarks of Mr Winslow caused thoughts to flit over his mind that were far from being agreeable.

A year or two more went by, and then an addition was made to the firm of Webb and Waldron. Edward Davis received the offer of an interest in the business, which unhesitatingly accepted. From that day he was on the road to fortune.

Three years afterwards one of the partners died, and Edward's interest in the concern was increased.

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Twenty five years from the time Mr Winslow, acting from a benevolent purpose, proposed to send young Davis to school, have passed.

One day about this period, Mr Winslow, who had met with a number of reverses in business, was sitting in his counting house with a troubled look on his face, when the mercantile friend before mentioned walked in.

'We are ruined!' said he, with much agitation.

Mr Winslow started to his feet.

'Speak!' he exclaimed. 'What new disaster is about to sweep over me?'

'The house of Toledo and Co. has suspended payment.'

Mr Winslow struck his hands together, and sunk down into the chair from which he had arisen.

'Then it is all over!' he murmured; 'all over!'

'It is all over with me,' said the other. A longer struggle would be fruitless. But for this I might have weathered the storm. So closes a business life of nearly forty years in commercial dishonor and personal ruin!'

'Are you certain that they have failed?' asked Mr Winslow, with something like hope in his tone of voice.

'It is too true,' was answered. 'The Celeste arrived this morning, and her letter bag was delivered at the post office half an hour ago. Have you received nothing by her?'

'I was not aware of her arrival. But I will send immediately for my letters.'

Too true was the information communicated by the friend: the large commission house of Toledo and Co. had failed, and protested drafts had been returned to a very heavy amount. Mr Winslow was among the sufferers, and to an extent that was almost equivalent to ruin.

For nearly five years everything had seemed to go against Mr Winslow. At the beginning of that period a son whom he had set up in business, failed, involving him in a heavy loss. Then one disaster after another followed, until he found himself in imminent danger of failure.

From this time he turned his mind to the consideration of his affairs with more earnestness than ever, and made every transaction with a degree of prudence and foresight that seemed to guarantee success in whatever he attempted.

A deficient supply of flour caused him to venture a large shipment. The sale was at a remunerative profit, but the failure of his consignees, before the payment of his drafts for the proceeds, entirely prostrated him. So hopeless did the merchant consider his case, that he did not even make an effort to get temporary aid.

When the friend of Mr Winslow came with the information that the house of Toledo & Co. had failed, the latter was searching about in his mind for the means of obtaining money to meet his acceptance, which fell due on that day. He had partly fixed upon the resources from which this money was to

come, when the news of his ill fortune arrived.

Yes it was ruin. Mr Winslow saw that in a moment, and his hands fell powerless by his side. He made no further effort to raise the money; but, after his mind had recovered a little from its first shock, he left his warehouse and retired to his home, to seek in its quiet the calmness and fortitude of which he stood so greatly in need. In this home were his wife and two daughters, who all their lives had enjoyed the many external comforts and elegancies that wealth can procure. The heart of the father ached as his eyes rested upon his children, and he thought of the sad reserves that awaited them.

On entering his dwelling, Mr Winslow sought the partner of his life, and communicated to her, without reserve, the painful intelligence of his approaching failure.

'Is it indeed so hopeless?' she asked, tears filling her eyes.

'I am utterly!' was the reply, in a voice that was full of anguish. And, in the bitterness of the moment, the unfortunate merchant wrung his hands.

To Mrs. Winslow the shock, was so unexpected, was very severe; and it was some time before her mind, after her husband's announcement, acquired any degree of calmness.

About half an hour after Mr Winslow's return home, and while both his own heart and that of his wife were quivering with pain, a servant came and said that a gentleman had called and wished to see him.

'Who is it?' asked the merchant.

'I did not understand his name,' replied the servant.

Mr Winslow forced as much external composure as was possible, and then descended to the parlour.

'Mr Davis,' he said, on entering.

'Mr Winslow,' returned the visitor, taking the merchant's hand, and grasping it warmly.

As the two men sat down together, the one addressed as Mr Davis said—

'I was sorry to learn, a little while ago, that you will lose by this failure.'

'Heavily. It has ruined me!' replied Mr Winslow.

'Not so bad as that I hope?' said Mr Davis.

'Yes. It has removed the last prop that I leaned on, Mr Davis—the very last one—and now the worst must come to the worst. It is impossible for me to take up the five thousand of returned gifts.'

'Five thousand, do you say, is the amount?'

'Yes.'

Mr Davis smiled on encouragingly.

'If that is all,' said he, 'there is no difficulty in the way. I can easily get you the money.'

Mr Winslow started, and a warm flush went over his face.

'Why didn't you come to me,' asked Mr Davis, 'the moment you found yourself in such a difficulty? Surely, and his voice slightly trembled, 'surely you did not think it possible for me to forget the past? Do not I owe you everything? and would I not be one of the basest of men if I forgot my obligation? If your need were twice five thousand, and it required the division of my last sovereign with you, not a hair of your head should be injured. I did not know that it was possible for you to get into an extremity like this until I heard it whispered a little while ago.'

So unexpected a turn in his affairs completely unmanned Mr Winslow. He covered his face, and wept for some time with the uncontrollable passion of a child.

'Ah! sir,' he said at length, in a broken voice, 'I did not expect this.'

'You had a right to expect it,' replied the young man. 'Were I to do less than sustain you in any extremity not too great for my ability, I would be unworthy the name of a man. And now, Mr Winslow, let your heart be at rest. You need not fall under this blow. Your drafts will probably come back to-morrow.'

'Yes; to-morrow at the latest.'

'Very well; I will see that you are provided with the means to take them up. It is nearly two o'clock now,' he added; 'so I will bid you good day. In fifteen minutes you will find a check at your warehouse.'

And with this Davis retired.

All this, which passed in a brief space of time, seemed like a dream to Mr Winslow. But it was a reality; and he comprehended it more fully when on reaching his warehouse he found there the promised check.

On the next day the protested drafts came in, but, thanks to the grateful kindness of Mr Davis, now a merchant with the command of large money facilities, he was able to take them up. The friend before introduced was less fortunate. There was no one to step forward and save him from ruin, and he sunk under the sudden pressure that came upon him.

A few days after this failure he met Mr Winslow.

'How is this?' said he; 'how did you weather the storm. I thought your condition as hopeless as mine.'

'So did I,' answered Mr Winslow; 'but I had forgotten a small investment made years ago. I have spoken of it to you before.'

The other looked slightly puzzled.

'Have you forgotten that investment in the charity fund, which you thought money thrown away?'

'Oh!' Light broke in upon his mind. 'You educated Davis. I remember now.'

'And Davis, hearing of my extremity, stepped forward and saved me. That was the best investment I ever made.'

The friend dropped his eyes to the pavement.